



Department plans to study sodium tax

Building on the triumph of the "sweet tax," which has demonstrated its efficacy in bolstering revenue and fostering consumer health, the Excise Department is contemplating a strategic restructure in the form of a "sodium tax." This proposed levy is designed to mirror the successful approach of the sweet tax and add considerations of Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) principles. The initial focus of the sodium tax initiative will encompass processed food items, including but not limited to instant noodles, frozen foods, and snacks.

The driving force behind the introduction of the sodium tax is the imperative to counter the adverse health effects stemming from excessive sodium consumption. High sodium intake has been associated with a range of health concerns, such as hypertension, kidney ailments, heart disease, and strokes. Notably, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a daily sodium intake of no more than 2,000 mg, yet the average sodium consumption among the Thais currently hovers around 3,600 mg.

Apart from the tax strategy, the government has pursued alternative measures aimed at convincing consumers to reduce their sodium

intake. These initiatives include informative campaigns that highlight the sodium content on nutritional labels of products.

While the sodium tax concept undergoes meticulous scrutiny through feasibility studies and a balanced examination of its merits and drawbacks, its potential impact is underscored by the tangible outcomes of the sweet tax. The remarkable reduction in the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, characterized by 10 to 14 grams of sugar per 100 ml, stands as a testament to the efficacy of the sweet tax. Research conducted by the Institute for Population and Social Research at Mahidol University substantiates this decline, reflecting a significant drop from an annual consumption of nearly 3 billion liters to fewer than 800 million liters over the past five years.

In essence, the prospect of a sodium tax poised for introduction stems from the success of the sweet tax and its reverberating influence on healthier consumer choices. The ongoing study of the sodium tax's viability is undoubtedly informed by the lessons gleaned from its sweet tax predecessor, presenting a compelling narrative of the potential for reduced sodium consumption and improved public health outcome

